

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 RABAT 01129 041646Z

47

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4760

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 1129

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT PDIP MO

SUBJ: KING DELAYS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: KING IN THRONE DAY SPEECH MARCH 3 DELAYED HIS PREVIOUS 1975 TIMING FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, STRESSING NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY IN FACE OF STRUGGLE TO REGAIN MOROCCAN TERRITORIES OCCUPIED BY SPAIN AS WELL AS IN LIGHT ECONOMIC SITUATION. ELECTIONS NOW HOPED FOR IN "SHORT TIME" WHEN MOROCCAN PEOPLE ARE "IN FULL REJOICING AFTER LIBERATION" OF THESE TERRITORIES. EVENTUAL FORMAL PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT BY POLITICAL PARTIES REMAINS OPEN, KING APPEALING IN MEANTIME FOR PARTIES TO JOIN IN "WORK OF THE STATE IN THE GENERAL INTEREST." REACTION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES LIMITED AS YET, BUT DISAPPOINTMENT ON THEIR PART TO BE EXPECTED. KING'S INTENTIONS REGARDING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY ARE THUS MORE AMBIGUOUS THAN BEFORE, PERHAPS STEMMING FROM INCREASED DOUBTS IN KING'S MIND ON SUBJECT WHILE COUNTRY FACING BOTH TERRITORIAL ISSUE WITH SPAIN AND ECONOMY AGGRAVATED BY RECENT DROUGHT AND UNCERTAIN WORLD TRADE OUTLOOK. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 RABAT 01129 041646Z

2. DELAY OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WAS MAIN MATTER OF INTEREST

IN KING'S THRONE DAY SPEECH OF MARCH 3. (KING'S COMMENTS ON TERRITORIAL DISPUTE WITH SPAIN AND ON ECONOMIC ISSUES REPORTED SEPTELS.)

3. FOLLOWING A REVIEW OF GOM'S "DUAL BATTLE" IN OVERCOMING ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND IN SEEKING RECOVERY OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES TO NORTH AND SOUTH, KING UNDERLINED NEED FOR "MOBILIZATION OF ALL POTENTIALITIES" TO ACHIEVE COUNTRY'S OBJECTIVES WHILE AVOIDING DEFEATISM AND DISTRACTION FROM ESSENTIALS.

4. KING THEN NOTED HE HAD INTENDED TO ORGANIZE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THIS YEAR. (IN HIS SEPT 17, 1974 PRESS CONFERENCE, HE HAD EXPRESSED HOPE OF SEEING PARLIAMENT IN PLACE BY OCTOBER 1975 - RABAT 4495). HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED, THE NECESSITY OF CLOSING RANKS TO PURSUE THE STRUGGLE HAD MADE IT IMPERATIVE TO DELAY ELECTIONS TO A LATER DATE. THIS DELAY OF "A FEW MONTHS" WOULD PERMIT CITIZENS TO PREPARE THEMSELVES BETTER FOR ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN WITHOUT NEGLECTING THEIR PRINCIPAL PREOCCUPATION, HE EXPLAINED. KING ELABORATED THAT HE HOPED TO BE ABLE TO ORGANIZE ELECTIONS WITHIN SHORT TIME WHEN MOROCCAN PEOPLE WOULD BE "IN FULL REJOICING AFTER THE LIBERATION OF USURPED TERRITORIES."

5. KING WENT ON TO LEAVE DOOR AJAR FOR PARTICIPATION IN AFFAIRS OF STATE BY POLITICAL PARTIES. WHILE AWAITING PROPITIOUS TIME FOR ELECTIONS, KING INDICATED, HE WELCOMED ALL CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVES. "IT IS CERTAIN," HE COMMENTED "THAT IF OTHER PREOCCUPATIONS (I.E., IN ADDITION TO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS) HAD BROUGHT ABOUT SUCH UNITY AND MOBILIZED SUCH ENERGY, THEY WOULD HAVE PROVOKED THE SAME UNANIMITY AND OBTAINED THE SAME CONSENSUS." REFERRING TO HIS "MANY PAST EXPRESSIONS" OF DESIRE TO SEE POLITICAL LEADERS IN GOVERNMENT, KING CALLED ON PARTIES TO JOIN IN "WORK OF THE STATE IN THE GENERAL INTEREST."

6. PRESS REACTION TO FOREGOING LIMITED SO FAR. MARCH 4 EDITION OF ISTIQLAL'S FRENCH AND ARABIC PAPERS REPORTED SPEECH FACTUALLY WITH HEADLINES CONCENTRATED ON ELECTION ISSUE: "KING POSTPONES ELECTIONS" (FRENCH) AND "ELECTIONS POSTPONED UNTIL LIBERATION OF USURPED TERRITORIES...." (ARABIC). PAPERS OF MORE RADICAL SOCIALIST UNION AND MOROCCAN LABOR UNION DID CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 RABAT 01129 041646Z

NOT APPEAR ON NEWSSTANDS. LATTER, WHICH APPEARS REGULARLY, PROBABLY SEIZED.

7. COMMENT: KING HAS BROKEN SILENCE OF NEARLY SIX MONTHS ON ELECTION QUESTION BUT HIS TIME FRAME AND STATED INTENTIONS HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE AMBIGUOUS THAN BEFORE. IN EFFECT, ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED SINE DIE, UNTIL KING JUDGES SITUATION PROPITIOUS.

8. KING ALSO LEFT OPEN QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT BY POLITICAL PARTIES. HIS WELCOMING OF CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVES AND REMARKS ON BENEFITS UNITY WOULD HAVE ON "OTHER PREOCCUPATIONS" MAY BE VEILED CRITICISM OF OPPOSITION GROUPS, WHOSE ATTACKS ON REGIME'S DOMESTIC POLICY HAVE BEEN UNIFORMLY BITTER. IMPLICATION MAY BE THAT, SHOULD PARTIES MUTE THEIR CRITICISM ON OFFICIAL INADEQUACY, PROCESS OF PARTICIPATION WILL BE SPEEDED.

9. WE WILL BE HEARING PRIVATE REACTIONS IN DAYS AHEAD, BUT DISAPPOINTMENT ON PART OF OPPOSITION PARTIES, WHICH HAD CLEARLY BEEN HOPING FOR MORE OF A BREAKTHROUGH, IS TO BE EXPECTED. UNFP AND PARTY OF PROGRESS AND SOCIALISM (COMMUNIST), THE WEAKER OF OPPOSITION PARTIES, HAD, OF COURSE, BEEN ADVOCATING LONGER PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR ELECTIONS. ISTIQLAL AND USFP, ON OTHER HAND, HAD TAKEN PUBLIC STAND OF BEING READY FOR ELECTIONS AT ANY TIME WHILE TELLING US PRIVATELY THAT EXACT TIMING OF ELECTIONS LESS CRUCIAL THAN GETTING PROCESS OF PARTY PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT UNDERWAY.

10. MEANWHILE, OUR PRELIMINARY FEELING IS THAT KING, WHO HAS EXHIBITED LONG-STANDING HESITATION ON SUBJECT OF OPENING PANDORA'S BOX OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY, MAY WELL HAVE DEVELOPED INCREASED DOUBTS ON SUBJECT WHILE COUNTRY IS FACING NOT ONLY MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE OF TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST SPAIN BUT ALSO ECONOMIC SITUATION AGGRAVATED BY RECENT DROUGHT AND UNCERTAIN OUTLOOK OF WORLD ECONOMY. FAILURE OF PRO-PALACE POLITICIANS TO COALESCE INTO VIABLE COUNTERWEIGHT TO OPPOSITION PARTIES MAY ALSO HAVE INFLUENCED HIS DECISION.
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